Amendments To the Claims:

1-13. (canceled)

14. (currently amended) A method for transparently exchanging data packets between network elements in ~~with~~ a packet-oriented network and and external device wherein ~~via which~~ a number of network elements afre connected through ~~and~~ a network node device to the external device, ~~are connected,~~ the network elements having

unique addresses only within the packet-oriented network, and

the packet-oriented network connected to the~~an~~ external device by the network node device, ~~and the unique address of a network element converted into an address valid for the external device by the network node device,~~ the method comprising:

setting up a connection between a first network element and the external device, including overwriting a unique address of the first network element with an IP address obtained from the external device; and

verifying message header entries of data packets exchanged between the external device and the first network element, wherein

if a message header having ~~entry characterizing~~ an expanded packet-oriented protocol is detected, a temporarily transparent connection is established between the first network element and the external device, and ~~wherein~~ the IP address obtained from the external device and assigned to the first network element is used without being converted by the network node device to the unique address in the packet-oriented network. ~~the unique address of the first network element is transferred to the external device without being converted by the network node device.~~

15. (canceled)

16. (previously presented) The method according to Claim 14, wherein a modulation/demodulation device is arranged between the external device and the network node device.

17. (currently amended) The method according to Claim 14~~15~~, wherein a modulation/demodulation device is arranged between the external device and the network node device.

18. (previously presented) The method according to Claim 14, wherein a verification is carried out before the transparent connection for the first network element is set up, to determine whether a connection of the same type already exists for at least one other network element or for the network node device.

19. (currently amended) The method according to Claim 14~~15~~, wherein a verification is carried out before the transparent connection for the first network element is set up, to determine whether a connection of the same type already exists for at least one other network element or for the network node device.

20. (previously presented) The method according to Claim 16, wherein a verification is carried out before the transparent connection for the first network element is set up, to determine whether a connection of the same type already exists for at least one other network element or for the network node device.

21. (previously presented) The method according to Claim 14, wherein a maximum number of transparent connections is defined depending on the specifications of the external device.

22. (currently amended) The method according to Claim 14~~15~~, wherein a maximum number of transparent connections is defined depending on the specifications of the external device.

23. (previously presented) The method according to Claim 21, wherein the establishment of the transparent connection of the first network element is rejected.

24. (previously presented) The method according to Claim 21, wherein an existing connection to a network element is canceled and the transparent connection of a further network element is then established.

25. (previously presented) The method according to Claim 14, wherein an existing transparent connection is terminated as soon as a connection release request is detected.

26. (previously presented) The method according to Claim 25, wherein the connection release request is triggered when a predefined time period, during which no data packets have been exchanged according to the expanded packet-oriented protocol, has been exceeded.

27. (previously presented) The method according to Claim 14, wherein the communication of the network elements with one another and/or with the network node device is alternatively effected either according to the Internet protocol or according to the PPPoE communication protocol.

28. (currently amended) A network node element for supporting a transparent exchange of data packets, comprising:

at least one network interface to a packet-oriented network connecting a plurality of network elements, wherein the network elements are assigned~~allocated~~ unique addresses only within the network;

at least one network interface to an external device;

at least one routing unit for ~~converting of~~ overwritng the unique address of a network element ~~into~~ with an address valid for the external device;

at least one monitoring unit for monitoring message header entries of the data packets exchanged between the external device and a first network element, wherein the monitoring unit is configured to detect a message header ~~entry characterizing~~ having an expanded packet-oriented protocol and upon such detection to establish a temporarily transparent connection between the first network element and the external device, and ~~whereby no address conversion of an address allocated to the first network element by the external device for the duration of the transparent connection is performed.~~ wherein the address transferred from the external device to the network node device is used without being converted by the network node device back to the previously assigned unique address of the network element in the packet-oriented network.

29. (previously presented) The network node element according to Claim 28, wherein the network node element is configured as a router.

30. (previously presented) The network node element according to Claim 28, wherein the monitoring unit controls at least one bridging device.

31. (previously presented) The network node element according to Claim 29, wherein the monitoring unit controls at least one bridging device.